



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20463

**Via First Class Mail and Facsimile (202) 654-6211**

Marc E. Elias, Esq.

Graham M. Wilson, Esq.

Jacquelyn K. Lopez, Esq.

Perkins Coie LLP

700 Thirteen Street, N.W., Suite 600

Washington, DC 20005-3960

**MAY 16 2018**

Re: MURs 7199, 7219 and 7242  
Patrick Murphy  
Friends of Patrick Murphy and  
Brian Foucart in his official capacity as  
treasurer  
Coastal Construction Group of South  
Florida, Inc.  
Thomas Murphy, Jr.

Dear Messrs. Elias and Wilson and Ms. Lopez:

On November 18, 2016, March 3, 2017 and May 1, 2017, the Federal Election Commission ("Commission") notified your clients, Patrick Murphy, Friends of Patrick Murphy and Brian Foucart in his official capacity as treasurer (the "Committee"), Coastal Construction Group of South Florida, Inc., and Thomas Murphy, Jr. that it received complaints alleging violations of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended ("the Act").

On April 10, 2018, the Commission found no reason to believe that your clients violated 52 U.S.C. §§ 30104(b), 30116 or 30118 with regard to the procurement, repayment, or reporting of the Committee's bank loan. There was an insufficient number of votes to make a finding as to the allegations that your clients made coordinated communications. The Factual and Legal Analysis, which explains the Commission's finding, is enclosed for your information.

Documents related to the case will be placed on the public record within 30 days. See Disclosure of Certain Documents in Enforcement and Other Matters, 81 Fed. Reg. 50,702 (Aug. 2, 2016), effective September 1, 2016.



1 **FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION**

2 **FACTUAL AND LEGAL ANALYSIS**

3

4 **RESPONDENTS:** Patrick Murphy **MURs:** 7119, 7219 and 7242

5 Friends of Patrick Murphy and Brian Foucart

6 in his official capacity as treasurer

7

8 Thomas Murphy, Jr.

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10 Coastal Construction Group of South Florida, Inc.

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12 **I. INTRODUCTION**

13 The complaints in these matters allege that 2016 Senate candidate Patrick Murphy (“the

14 Candidate”) and his campaign committee, Friends of Patrick Murphy and Brian Foucart in his

15 official capacity as treasurer (the “Committee”), accepted excessive and prohibited contributions,

16 in violation of 52 U.S.C. §§ 30116(f) and 30118 in connection with a bank loan that was

17 procured and repaid with the Candidate’s assistance.

18 Specifically, Complainants allege that Coastal Construction Group of South Florida, Inc.

19 (“Coastal Construction”) and Thomas Murphy, Jr., who is the Candidate’s father and Coastal

20 Construction’s Board Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, made an illegal contribution when

21 they bought back \$1 million in Coastal Construction stock from the Candidate, who then used

22 the proceeds both to secure a bank loan to the Committee, and to repay the Committee’s loan.

23 The Complainant in MUR 7219 also alleges that Respondents violated the regulation limiting

24 post-election committee repayments of personal loans from a candidate, and that the Committee

25 misreported the loan.

26 Respondents assert that the Candidate obtained the \$1 million in Coastal Construction

27 stock prior to and independent of his Senate candidacy, and he properly reported it as a personal

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1 asset. Respondents state that the Candidate sold his stock for fair market value, and he properly  
2 used the proceeds, which were his personal funds, as collateral for the Committee's bank loan  
3 and to repay the loan, and the Committee properly reported both transactions.<sup>1</sup> Respondents also  
4 maintain that the regulation regarding repayment of candidate loans is inapplicable because the  
5 Candidate repaid the Committee's loan, not the reverse.

6 The available information indicates that the proceeds from the sale of the Coastal  
7 Construction stock were the Candidate's personal funds, and could be used to secure or repay a  
8 loan on behalf of the Committee. Further, the repayment did not violate Commission  
9 regulations, and it appears to have been properly reported. Accordingly, the Commission finds  
10 no reason to believe that Patrick Murphy, Friends of Patrick Murphy and Brian Foucart in his  
11 official capacity as treasurer, Coastal Construction Group of South Florida, Inc., Thomas  
12 Murphy, Jr. violated 52 U.S.C. §§ 30104(b), 30116 or 30118 with regard to the procurement,  
13 repayment, or reporting of the Committee's bank loan.

## 14 II. FACTUAL AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

### 15 A. Facts

16 Patrick Murphy was a candidate for the U.S. Senate in the 2016 election cycle. The  
17 Committee was his 2016 principal campaign committee.

18 Before his election to the House of Representatives in 2012, the Candidate was Vice  
19 President and owned shares in Coastal Construction, a closely held corporation owned by the  
20 Murphy family.<sup>2</sup> On December 28, 2012, before he entered Congress, the Candidate received

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<sup>1</sup> MUR 7199 Resp. at 3-5; MUR 7219 Resp. at 1-3; MUR 7242 Resp. at 1, 5.

<sup>2</sup> MUR 7199 Compl. at 1; MUR 7199 Resp. at 1-2.

1 additional shares in Coastal Construction from his parents, Leslie and Thomas Murphy, Jr.<sup>3</sup> The  
2 Candidate disclosed his ownership of the Coastal Construction shares as personal assets in his  
3 Personal Financial Disclosure Reports filed with the Clerk of the House of Representatives  
4 (“House disclosure reports”).<sup>4</sup> On the 2015 and 2016 House disclosure reports attached to the  
5 Response, the Candidate valued the shares as being worth \$1-5 million.<sup>5</sup>

6 On October 25, 2016, Murphy sold a portion of his shares in Coastal Construction back  
7 to the company for \$1,000,120.<sup>6</sup> Respondents maintain that the sale was conducted in  
8 accordance with, and under the valuation method established by, a shareholders’ agreement.<sup>7</sup>  
9 The Candidate then pledged the proceeds as collateral for a \$1 million bank loan the Committee  
10 obtained at an interest rate of 3.5% and which matured on April 25, 2017.<sup>8</sup> The Committee  
11 disclosed the loan before the election on a 48-hour Notice of Contributions and also on its 2016  
12 Post-General Election Report.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> MUR 7199 Resp. at 2. *See also* Thomas Murphy, Jr. Decl. ¶ 4 (Jan. 17, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> MUR 7199 Resp. at 2, Ex. B; MUR 7242 Resp. 1, Ex. B.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* The disclosure reports attached to the Response only cover 2015 and 2016, but his House disclosure reports for 2012 through 2014 also show the shares and the same value range.

<sup>6</sup> MUR 7199 Resp. at 3-5; MUR 7242 Resp. at 3-5; *see also* Thomas Murphy, Jr. Decl. ¶¶ 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> The terms of the sale were formally approved by a written consent of the Board of Directors and Shareholders of Coastal Construction, which found that the sale was in the best interest of the company. MUR 7199 Resp. at 3-5; MUR 7242 Resp. at 3-5; *see also* Thomas Murphy, Jr. Decl. ¶ 7.

<sup>8</sup> MUR 7199 Resp. at 3-5; MUR 7242 Resp. at 3-5.

<sup>9</sup> MUR 7199 Resp. at 3-5; MUR 7242 Resp. at 3-5. *See* Committee 2016 Post-General Election Report, <http://docquery.fec.gov/pdf/587/201612130200766587/201612130200766587.pdf>; Committee 48 Hour Notice of Contributions/Loans Received, <http://docquery.fec.gov/pdf/650/201610310200642650/201610310200642650.pdf>.

1 On December 1, 2016, Murphy repaid the loan using the same \$1 million that he pledged  
2 as collateral.<sup>10</sup> The Committee reported the loan repayment on its 2016 Year-End Report as an  
3 in-kind contribution from Murphy to the Committee.<sup>11</sup>

4 **B. Analysis**

5 A contribution is any gift, subscription, loan, advance, or deposit of money or anything of  
6 value made by any person for the purpose of influencing any election for Federal office.<sup>12</sup> The  
7 Act provides that no person may make, and no candidate, officer, or employee of a political  
8 committee (other than an independent-expenditure-only committee or a hybrid account) shall  
9 knowingly accept any contribution that violates the contribution limits<sup>13</sup> set forth in 52 U.S.C.  
10 § 30116, or the prohibitions on contributions by national banks, corporations, or labor  
11 organizations set forth in 52 U.S.C. § 30118.

12 As a general exception to this rule, Commission regulations provide, “candidates for  
13 federal office may make unlimited expenditures from personal funds,” which include  
14 contributions to their principal campaign committees.<sup>14</sup> Personal funds include “personal  
15 assets,” which are “[a]mounts derived from any asset that, under applicable State law, at the time  
16 the individual became a candidate, the candidate had legal right of access to or control over, and  
17 with respect to which the candidate had legal and rightful title or an equitable interest,” as well as

<sup>10</sup> MUR 7214 Resp. at 2; MUR 7242 Resp. at 2.

<sup>11</sup> MUR 7214 Resp. at 2; MUR 7242 Resp. at 2; Committee 2016 Year-End Report, <http://docquery.fec.gov/pdf/890/201701310200021890/201701310200021890.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> 52 U.S.C. § 30101(8)(A)(i) (emphasis added).

<sup>13</sup> During the 2016 election cycle, the individual contribution limit was \$2,700 per election.

<sup>14</sup> 11 C.F.R. §§ 110.10, 100.33. *See also* Advisory Op. 1991-90 (Hoagland) (Jan. 15, 1991) (affirming that Commission regulations permit a candidate to make unlimited expenditures, including personal loans, from his personal funds); Advisory Op. 1985-33 (Collins) (Nov. 22, 1985) (same).

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1 "income," which includes "[i]ncome from the candidate's stock or other investments  
2 including...proceeds from the sale or liquidation of such stocks or investments."<sup>15</sup> A candidate  
3 may sell a personal asset for fair market value and then use the income derived from the sale to  
4 benefit his authorized campaign committee without violating the Act, so long as the asset is sold  
5 at the "normal and usual market price."<sup>16</sup>

6 Under the Act, a "loan" includes a guarantee, endorsement, and any other form of  
7 security.<sup>17</sup> Each endorser or guarantor shall be deemed to have contributed that portion of the  
8 total amount of the loan for which he or she agreed to be liable in a written agreement.<sup>18</sup> A loan  
9 that exceeds the contribution limits, or otherwise violates 52 U.S.C. §§ 30116 or 30118, is  
10 unlawful, whether or not it is repaid.

11 A loan to a political committee or a candidate by a commercial bank is exempt from the  
12 definition of contribution, if such loan is made in accordance with applicable law and in the  
13 ordinary course of business.<sup>19</sup> A loan will be deemed to be made in the ordinary course of  
14 business if it: "(1) [b]ears the usual and customary interest rate of the lending institution for the  
15 category of loan involved; (2) [i]s made on a basis that assures repayment; (3) [i]s evidenced by  
16 a written instrument; and (4) [i]s subject to a due date or amortization schedule."<sup>20</sup> A loan is

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<sup>15</sup> 11 C.F.R. §§ 110.10, 100.33(a), (b).

<sup>16</sup> See Factual and Legal Analysis at 6 MUR 6412 (Blumenthal) (Commission found it permissible for a candidate to sell his interest in a residence they owned jointly to his wife and then loan the proceeds of the sale to his principal campaign committee); Advisory Op 1984-60 (Mulloy) (Jan. 11, 1986) (Commission found it permissible for a candidate to sell his interest in a partnership to a family member and use the proceeds to retire campaign debt, so long as the sale was made at the "usual and normal" market price).

<sup>17</sup> 11 C.F.R. § 100.52(b).

<sup>18</sup> 11 C.F.R. §§ 100.52(b)(3), 100.82(c).

<sup>19</sup> 11 C.F.R. § 100.82(a).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

1 considered "made on a basis that assures repayment" if it is obtained using a perfected security  
2 interest in collateral owned by the candidate, the fair market value of the collateral is equal to or  
3 greater than the loan amount, and the candidate provides documentation to show that the lending  
4 institution has a perfected security interest in the collateral.<sup>21</sup> Sources of collateral include  
5 goods, accounts receivable, and cash on deposit.<sup>22</sup>

6 Here, the Committee's loan from Amalgamated Bank was guaranteed by the Candidate's  
7 personal funds. The stock in Coastal Construction, which Murphy sold to get the \$1 million to  
8 guarantee the Committee's loan, had been Murphy's personal property since December 2012 and  
9 had been declared as a personal asset on his House disclosure reports for 2012 through 2016.<sup>23</sup>  
10 The Candidate sold the stock back to Coastal Construction for the "Book Value" as defined in  
11 Coastal Construction's shareholders' agreement.<sup>24</sup> The Complaints provide no facts to support  
12 the allegations that the shares of the closely held company had "no real market value" or that the  
13 value of the shares was "contrived."<sup>25</sup> The Candidate's father provided a sworn statement that  
14 the issuance and sale of the stock was governed by a shareholders' agreement, executed on  
15 December 9, 1998, which establishes that the "Book Value" of its stock would be determined by  
16 the fair market value, as calculated by a certified public accountant using generally accepted  
17 accounting principles.<sup>26</sup> Without information to refute the assertions in this declaration, there is

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<sup>21</sup> 11 C.F.R. § 100.82(e)(1)(i).

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> MUR 7199 Resp. at 3-4, Ex. B.

<sup>24</sup> MUR 7199 Resp. at Ex. B.

<sup>25</sup> MUR 7242 Compl. at 2.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Murphy, Jr. Decl. ¶ 5.

1 no basis to suggest that the Candidate did not receive fair market value for the sale of his  
2 shares.<sup>27</sup>

3 Further, the terms of the \$1 million loan the Candidate guaranteed for the Committee  
4 seem to satisfy the requirements of 11 C.F.R. § 100.82. The loan to the Committee by  
5 Amalgamated Bank, a national commercial bank, bears a 3.5% interest rate, which, according to  
6 the terms of the Credit Agreement, was equal to “the interest rate per annum equal to the Base  
7 Rate in effect on such day, plus the Applicable Margin” and was not less than 3.25%.<sup>28</sup>  
8 Additionally, the loan was made on a basis that assured repayment since it was guaranteed by \$1  
9 million cash collateral. Finally, the terms of the loan are reflected in the written Credit  
10 Agreement Murphy executed on October 25, 2016, and the loan had a maturity date of April 25,  
11 2017.<sup>29</sup> Respondents assert that the loan was at the usual and customary interest rate of the  
12 lending institution for this type of secured loan. Complainants offer no information which  
13 refutes this claim, and we are not aware of any contrary information.

14 In addition, the allegation that Murphy’s repayment was improper is based on a  
15 misapplication of 11 C.F.R. § 116.11. Commission regulations also restrict how an authorized  
16 committee may repay personal loans by a candidate that exceed \$250,000.<sup>30</sup> “Personal loans,”  
17 for the purposes of 11 C.F.R. § 116.11, include “loans made to a candidate’s authorized  
18 committee that are endorsed or guaranteed by the candidate or that are secured by the candidate’s

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<sup>27</sup> See AO 1984-60 (Mulloy) (Stating that an appraisal by an expert using generally acceptable appraisal methods is acceptable as prima facie evidence of a property’s usual market price, although it does not rule out other valuation methods that would “reliably establish such price or value”); see also Factual and Legal Analysis at 6 MUR 5421 (Kerry for President) (Commission accepted appraisal by a state-certified appraiser as “prima facie evidence of the fair market value” of the property).

<sup>28</sup> MUR 7199 Resp. at Ex. B.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> 11 C.F.R. § 116.11(b), (c).

1 personal funds.”<sup>31</sup> An authorized committee “[m]ay repay the entire amount of the personal  
2 loans using contributions to the candidate or the candidate’s authorized committee provided that  
3 those contributions were made on the day of the election or before” and “[m]ay repay up to  
4 \$250,000 of the personal loans from contributions made to the candidate or the candidate’s  
5 authorized committee after the date of the election,” if it does so within 20 days of the election.<sup>32</sup>  
6 If the aggregate outstanding balance of the personal loans exceeds \$250,000 after the election,  
7 the committee may only use the amount of cash on hand as of the day after the election to repay  
8 all or part of the personal loans, and must treat the portion of any outstanding balance as a  
9 contribution by the candidate, which should be reported in the first disclosure report filed after  
10 the election.<sup>33</sup>

11 Complainant misapplies the regulation, which restricts loan repayments *by committees*.  
12 The Committee did not repay a personal loan from the Candidate. Rather, the Candidate repaid  
13 the Committee’s bank loan, and the Committee properly reported the loan repayment as an in-  
14 kind contribution. Further, there is no information to suggest the repayment of the loan violated  
15 the Act or any other Commission regulation.

16 Further, the Complaint’s contention that the Committee improperly reported the single  
17 loan as two \$1 million loans in its 2016 Post-General Election Report is incorrect.<sup>34</sup> The  
18 Committee properly reported both the loan and Murphy’s guaranty in accordance with 11 C.F.R.

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<sup>31</sup> 11 C.F.R. § 116.11(a).

<sup>32</sup> 11 C.F.R. § 116.11(b)(1).

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> MUR 7219 Compl. at 2-3.

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1 §§ 100.82(b) and 104.3 on the Committee's 2016 Post-General Election Report.<sup>35</sup> The loan  
2 guaranty was also reported in a 48-hour notice filed with the Commission, in compliance with  
3 Section 104.5(f). Similarly, the Committee reported the loan repayment as an in-kind  
4 contribution from Murphy and as an itemized disbursement to the lender on its 2016 Year-End  
5 Report.<sup>36</sup>

6 In summary, the Commission finds no reason to believe that Patrick Murphy, Friends of  
7 Patrick Murphy and Brian Foucart in his official capacity as treasurer, Thomas Murphy, Jr., and  
8 Coastal Construction violated 52 U.S.C. §§ 30116 or 30118 by accepting or making excessive or  
9 prohibited contributions to the Murphy campaign in connection with the Committee's bank loan.  
10 Further, the Commission finds no reason to believe the Committee violated 52 U.S.C. § 30104(b)  
11 or 11 C.F.R. § 116.11 in connection with the Committee's bank loan or its repayment.

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<sup>35</sup> See also AO 1985-33 (Collins).

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*